

REMARKS

The present application was filed on February 29, 2000 with claims 1 through 20. Claims 1 through 20 are presently pending in the above-identified patent application. Claim 9 is proposed to be amended herein.

5 In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 9-12, and 17-18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laor (United States Patent Number 6,031,947). The Examiner indicated that claims 5-8, 13-16, and 19-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

10 The present invention is directed to a method and apparatus for aligning and maintaining the alignment of the transmitting unit and the receiving unit in an optical wireless communication system. The receiving unit includes an optical bundle positioned at the focal point of an objective optic element. The optical bundle is comprised of an array of optical fibers, arranged surrounding the receiving fiber. The receiving unit also includes a number of detectors that measure the optical signal strength on a corresponding fiber in the optical bundle. The array of fibers is used
15 to detect the location of the received signal relative to the receiving optical fiber and to provide

Independent Claims 1, 9 and 17

Claims 1, 9, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laor. In particular, the Examiner asserts that Laor discloses “a method of aligning fiber ends including using a bundle with a receiving fiber that analyzes the signal strengths of the surrounding
20 fibers relative to the receiving fiber in order to detect the location and provide a feedback for precise alignment (col. 3, lines 14-24 and col. 5, lines 53-64).”

Applicant notes that Laor is directed to aligning bundles of fibers containing control and communication signals. The *alignment of the control signals alone* is monitored and used to control the alignment of the bundles in order that *both* the control and communication receivers
25 receive the maximum strength signal that can be achieved. Independent claim 1 requires “wherein an orientation of said receiving unit” is adjusted based on an “intensity of said optical communication signal received by said receiving fiber *relative* to an intensity of said optical communication signal received by said array of optical fibers.” Independent claim 9, as amended, requires “wherein said array of optical fibers detects a location of said signal relative to said

receiving fiber...based on an intensity of said optical communication signal received by said receiving fiber *relative* to an intensity of said optical communication signal received by said array of optical fibers.” Independent claim 17 requires “repositioning said optical bundle *to reduce the signal strength in said fibers in said array of optical fibers and to increase the signal strength in said receiving fiber.*”

Thus, Laor does not disclose or suggest repositioning the receiving fibers of an optical communication system based on an intensity of said optical communication signal received by said receiving fiber relative to an intensity of said optical communication signal received by said array of optical fibers, as required by independent claims 1 and 9, as amended, and does not disclose or suggest repositioning said optical bundle to reduce the signal strength in said fibers in said array of optical fibers and to increase the signal strength in said receiving fiber as required by independent claim 17.

Dependent Claims 2-8, 10-16 and 18-20

Dependent Claims 2-4, 10-12, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laor.

Claims 2-8, 10-16, and 18-20 are dependent on Claims 1, 9, and 17, respectively, and are therefore patentably distinguished over Laor because of their dependency from independent Claims 1, 9, and 17 for the reasons set forth above, as well as other elements these claims add in combination to their base claim. The Examiner has already indicated that claims 5-8, 13-16, and 19-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

If any outstanding issues remain, or if the Examiner has any further suggestions for expediting allowance of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

The Examiner's attention to this matter is appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Kleen M. Mason
Kevin M. Mason
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Reg. No. 36,597
Ryan, Mason & Lewis, LLP
1300 Post Road, Suite 205
Fairfield, CT 06824
(203) 255-6560

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